

## ABSTRACT

Compositions and methods are disclosed for the therapeutic use of an *atonal*-associated nucleic acid or amino acid sequence. Also, an animal heterozygous for an  
5 *atonal*-associated gene inactivation is also disclosed having at least one *atonal*-associated nucleic acid sequence replaced by insertion of a heterologous nucleic acid sequence used to detect expression driven by an *atonal*-associated promoter sequence, wherein the inactivation of the *atonal*-associated nucleic acid sequence prevents expression of the *atonal*-associated gene.

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